

What Consumers Should Know

- Consumers should always rinse fruits and vegetables in water.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) encourages the consumption of fruits and vegetables in every meal as part of a healthy diet.
- Before a company can sell or distribute any pesticide in the United States of America, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) must review studies on the pesticide to determine that it will not pose unreasonable risks to human health or the environment. Once EPA has made that determination, it will license or register that pesticide for use in strict accordance with label directions.
- EPA regulates pesticide use under two major federal statutes: the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) of 1947 which regulates pesticide registrations in the U.S., and the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act (FFDCA) of 1938 under which EPA establishes tolerances (maximum legally permissible levels) for pesticide residues in food. The Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA) of 1996 amended these two pesticide laws to mandate a single, health-based standard for all pesticides in all foods. FQPA provides stricter safety standards than FIFRA and FFDCA, especially for infants and children and requires periodic re-evaluation of pesticide registrations and tolerances to ensure that the scientific data supporting pesticide registrations will remain up to date in the future. The Pesticide Data Program (PDP) provides data for the periodic re-evaluation of food tolerances.
- If the pesticide is used on food crops, EPA sets a tolerance or maximum residue level of the pesticide that can remain in or on foods. In setting the tolerance, EPA is required to make a safety finding for the pesticide accounting for all possible routes of exposure (through food, water and in home environments).
- In evaluating consumer exposure to pesticides through the diet, EPA uses all available information provided by company registrants, PDP and others to verify that tolerances meet the safety standards set by the FQPA of 1996.
- There are many pesticides available for use on the same crop; however, not all crops are treated with these pesticides and pesticide treatments vary according to crop geographical location, time of year, climatic conditions, and pest and disease pressures. These differences are captured by PDP data which reflect actual residues present in food grown in various regions of the U.S. and overseas.
- PDP data are essential in supporting efforts by the USDA and EPA to assess the American consumer's dietary exposure to pesticide residues, as directed by the FQPA. PDP concentrates its efforts mainly on foods most often consumed by infants and children.

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- This report shows that overall pesticide residues found on foods tested are at levels below the tolerances established by EPA.
 - The PDP laboratory methods used are geared to detect the smallest possible levels of pesticide residues, even when those levels are well below the safety margins (tolerances) established by EPA. Prior to testing, PDP analysts washed samples for 10 seconds with gently running cold water as a consumer would do at home; no chemicals, soap or any special wash was used.
 - PDP informs the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) if residues detected exceed the EPA tolerance or have no EPA tolerance established. In 2009, residues exceeding the tolerance were detected in 0.3 percent of all samples tested and residues with no established tolerance were found in 2.7 percent of the samples.
 - The report shows that none of the residue detections in the finished water samples exceeded established EPA Maximum Contaminant Levels, Health Advisory levels, or established Freshwater Aquatic Organism criteria.